Section Two.

The Washington Times.

Editorials, The Drama, and Society.

WASHINGTON, SUNDAY, JULY 6, 1902.

THE UNIQUE FRIENDSHIP OF ARTIST AND PRIZEFIGHTER

STRANGE Attraction for Charles Dana Gibson in the Brawny, Freckled-Faced Fitzsimmons, Whose Prowess in the Squared Circle Has Made Him as Famous as the Creator of a Type of Feminine Beauty

STUDY OF FITZSIMMONS' HEAD.

ROBERT FITZSIMMONS, who occupies a niche in the Temple of Fame for having thumped, beaten, and half-killed a number of his fellow-men with a freckled fist, has no greater admirer than Charles Dana Gibson, who is known to the world as the portrayer of refined American girlhood. To those unacquainted personally with Mr. Gibson, a friendship of this sort would seem anomalous, Bob Fitzsimmons, bruiser, and Dana Gibson, society's artist, but the few that are favored with the latter's intimacy easily find the explanation.

Charles Dana Gibson, while he stands in a lime-light something akin to that of the "matinee idol," is really a hard working, industrious man, devoted to his family and using art as a means of livelihood. Compared with the usual types, at least, those to be seen on the Paris boulevards, where flowing locks and long black neckties are the marks of the profession to denote eccentricity, Mr. Gibson is a staid business man. He works in his studio from five to six hours every day, year after year, and his labor is systematized like that of the banker or railroad official.

His hours of recreation he spends as much as possible in his home on East Thirty-fifth Street, New York, where he is sure to be welcomed on returning from the studio by his two youngsters, notable for their superb health and childish wit. He would rather be there than anywhere else, but unfortunately New York's "400" so lionize the Gibsons that neither the artist nor his wife—she who was Miss Langhorne, of Virginia—are at liberty to dedicate their time as they please. The two have been caught in a social maelstrom, from which it is impossible to be extricated, and many an evening that Mr. Gibson would prefer devoting to a ringside contest he is compelled to spend in the boredom of a social function. At the homes of fashion Dana Gibson is not an attraction so much on account of his fame as for his powers of conversation, for, with a peculiarly dry humor and a graphic style of narrative that would have insured his success as a writer, he is looked upon, next to Peter Dunne (Mr. Dooley) as being the most interesting talker in New York.

Personally Mr. Gibson is big and wholesome, with an intense regard for everything manly, perhaps even brutal. Beautiful women, magnificent scenery and gorgeous exhibitions do not entertain him nearly so much as a struggle where grit and prowess count. "I would much rather see that fight between Fitzsimmons and Jeffries," he said recently, "than be in Westminster Abbey on coronation day. The one is simply a foolish pageant that any one might arrange; the other represents the utmost human strength and acumen.

"Fitzsimmons I regard as the very 'last word' in athletic accomplishments. He is much more admirable than Ajax or even old Atlas, supporting the world. As for college football players, they are mere stripling amateurs. Think what this pugilist does! His whole being is so wonderfully attuned that he may put his every ounce of weight and muscle in a single blow so terrific that it would knock down a row of men. Yet he keeps his balance and follows up with another blow just as hard. To stand before that lithe, compact body, with narrow, gleaming eyes, picking out every frailty, is enough to make one faint with fear. It is like standing in front of a loaded cannon. Those living rods of steel, his arms, work with a precision and force that suggest hidden powerful machinery. To him fighting is a real science."

Mr. Gibson not only admires Fitz as a fighter, but as a good family man and a humorist. "He is," says the artist, "one of the few novel and interesting men that I have met. Now think of this for a diverting personality," and Mr. Gibson relates the experience of his friend Bob Davis, a New York newspaper man, who was sent out to Carson City to cover the Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight.

One evening, when Davis was sitting at supper in the training quarters, a few days before the battle, very much absorbed in a diet of apple pie, Fitzsimmons conceived the pretty joke of tapping the newspaper man over the head with a feather pillow. Winking to the others, he slyly approached, twirling the bag of feathers to get momentum, while Davis, blissfully unconscious, continued with his round, genial face immersed in the recesses of the pie.

The blow that Fitzsimmons let fall in playfulness was so stunning that Davis dropped from his seat to the floor, completely knocked out, and did not come to for about five minutes. He then staggered to his feet, and reached the veranda, but it being winter time, he slipped on ice, struck his head upon a post, and again fell, this time in the snow.

The commotion brought Mrs. Fitzsimmons to the scene, and though Bob was remorseful she "rubbed it in" until the tears stood in the pugilist's eyes.

"Bob Fitzsimmons," declared his better half, "if you've killed that young man it'll serve you right. It'll be a lesson to you. Just to think hittin' of a guest in your house. Oh, yes, pour vinegar in his nose if you will, but he's mortally injured and you're a murderer!"

The pugilist, who had summoned the whole camp, each of whom was applying different remedies to the prostrate reporter, was convulsed with grief. "It ain't the pain he's sufferin' that makes me feel bad," he cried, "but to 've 'im think, 'is best friend 'it him!" And when Davis finally opened his eyes the pugilist hugged him until his ribs nearly cracked.

"Now just to show you, Bobby, me boy, that I meant no harm I'll hit Dan Hickey (his sparring partner). Dan, stan' up there." With that he brought the pillow down upon the heavyweight, using considerable muscle, but either the pillow was old and soggy or else it happened to strike a vital point. At any rate Hickey went to the floor as though he would never rise and it took 15 minutes to bring him back to life. But Fitz was radiant. "I just wanted to show you, Bob Davis," he said, "that I couldn't 'ave killed you. It was just a joke!"

Another curiosity of Fitzsimmons' humor was illustrated one day at Bath Beach, when a pugilistic friend called to see him. The two strolled down to the pier and were talking fraternally about matters of the profession, when Fitz suggested that if his friend fell overboard with his silk hat and frock coat it would be "funny." The friend didn't "know about that," and was edging away, when Fitz suddenly caught him by the shoulders, and with a quick push sent him headlong off the dock into the sea, a fall of about twenty feet. The splash and cry brought police and a crowd, but they only found the heavyweight clapping his hands with glee, while his friend was swimming desperately to recover his silk hat.

"Shall I arrest him?" inquired the officer. "Oh, no," sputtered the friend. "Why, that was only a joke. Bob's my best friend." Whereupon he emerged from the waves, dripping with brine, both hat and clothes ruined. "That was pretty good, Bob!" he exclaimed, "but you couldn't do it again. You see I wasn't lookin'. Now, if I'd got a hold on you like this, you'd a gone down yourself." While he was explaining, his friend, who was a champion wrestler, locked a leg within one of Fitz's, and quick as a flash unset the Australian and rolled him into the sea. Fitz said it was more fun than he'd had for an age.

"Fitzsimmons," says Mr. Gibson, "would have made a success at most anything. He has the true qualities of manhood. Once your friend he is always your friend, and no libel goes with him. He is so abstemious that one glass upsets him; care of the physical person and hygiene amount to a religion. His disposition is benign and his heart is tender, and I do not hold it against him that he makes his living by fighting.

"That is what he does best, and it is good logic for everyone to follow the vocation for which he is best fitted. Fitzsimmons was a blacksmith once, but after becoming champion of that trade, he found it made him no money, so he turned to the other and determined to understand and master it. When a lad, I believe, he was sent to school with the hope of entering the church. The instructor, however, did not treat Fitz square by withholding a prize consisting of a prayer book that the boy had won, and so the church lost what might have been a renowned light."

One of the stories that has made Dana Gibson famous as a raconteur is Fitzsimmons' description of a knock-out. If this were taken down in shorthand as Gibson relates it classic literature would be enriched. "Fitz," he says, "illustrates the thing hearing a band of music. When a prizefighter is struck on the point of the jaw with sufficient force to floor and daze him, he immediately hears the whole orchestra. The cornets are flaring fiercely, the piccolos screeeching, and bass drum thumping, the tenor drum rattling, the cymbals clinking, and the big horns tooting.

"Presently, as the man's legs begin to wabble, and he clutches madly at the empty air, the music grows fainter and fainter. Down on the sawdust floor is the unhappy man, while the referee, with slow but certain precision, is counting one, two, three. But the fighter sees not the finger striking his knell. He only strives and strives to hear the band play. Now the tenor drum is so faint that it seems to be far outside the building, the bass horns can hardly be heard, and the cornets sound as though the band were marching farther and farther away.

"Time is an eternity, and though the referee has only counted six it seems as though the band had been playing for many hours. The fighter tries to lift his head; he strains every nerve; his face speaks agony. If he could only hear the piccolos! But it is too late. An only sound is the tiny note of the cornet, and suddenly that stops. The man is knocked out."

Fitzsimmons, who has fought more than 300 battles and been knocked out only a few times, lays great stress on the band theory. So long as you can hear one note, he says, there is a chance, for the music may begin to grow louder, and that means that you are coming round. But if it absolutely stops, then there is no hope. The fighter is a "dead one."

Mr. Gibson predicts that Fitzsimmons will win the championship from Jeffries in the approaching great battle, because, in the last contest he, like many others, does not think Fitzsimmons was at his best. But if the other prevail on account of his being little more than half as old and his immense strength, the veteran pugilist will drop none in the artist's estimation. "Fitzsimmons," he says, "represents a life of sincere application to a vocation that, if not considered elevating, at least calls for real bravery, self-control and determination, and these traits are to be admired whether the man is a prize fighter or a prime minister."

MOST ACCOMPLISHED PARROT IN THE COUNTRY

"DICK," the parrot from Bucyrus, Ohio., which was sold to H. R. Walcott of 44 West Forty-fourth Street, New York, is probably the most accomplished bird of the kind in the country.

Dick is only four years old and has been the mascot at the Deal House at Bucyrus for most of that time, being kept in a small room just off the hotel parlor. In this parlor, frequented by many people, the bird overheard and picked up its fluent vocabulary. He knew most of the traveling men who paid attention to him, and frequently called them by name when they arrived, asked how business was, and bade them good-by when they left.

Dick's chief pleasure was in playing tricks on people, especially those who were waiting for trains or for a car on the electric line for Galion. He would select some particularly fussy person, preferably a woman, and just as the victim would get comfortably seated, would shout, "All aboard, here's your car for Galion." The person would grab up band box and bag in a frantic endeavor to get to the car and would be spurred on by a loud voice saying, "Hurry, now." The victim of the joke would be led back to in a breathless condition to hear the bird say, "Dick, you're a bad boy, but that was pretty good. Ha, ha, ha."

Dick also called trains like the porter, and many a traveling man has made a frantic dash for the depot on account of Dick's human shout, "Train East." Dick acquired a peculiar nasal twang possessed by F. M. Kerr, the proprietor of the hotel, and took a peculiar delight in summoning people from all parts of the hotel by calling their names in a clever imitation of the landlord. When they arrived he would laugh heartily and say, "Dick, why don't you ever shut up?"

Many people pronounced the bird a fake and claimed that it was a clever piece of ventriloquism, but an investigation always dispelled any such suspicions and brought forth praises for the truly wonderful bird.

Having once heard a thing, Dick could always repeat it, and in the same tone it was said. Dick is no respecter of persons when he sees an opportunity of perpetrating a joke. The various ministers of Bucyrus had an association which met every Monday morning in the Deal House parlor. Dick listened patiently through several Monday morning sessions and then concluded to take a hand himself. One of the ministers opened the session with prayer, and suddenly, during a lull in the petition, Dick broke in with, "O Lord, give us thy presence here this afternoon." The minister was disconcerted and there was a very unclerical snicker from the assembly. Not daunted, however, the minister began again, but Dick, becoming interested in his part of the program, piped in with, "Give us seeing eyes, hearing ears, and understanding hearts." The snicker deepened into laughter, and the minister stopped, while Dick continued reverently, "Shed upon us the light of thy countenance and grant us thy grace." The ministers shouted with laughter, but when they came to order again, and one rose to speak, Dick said in a tone of deep disgust, "Oh, shut up." Someone rose and, taking the cage into the hall, dropped it with a thump. Before the door could be closed Dick was heard to say commiseratingly: "Now, Dick, will you be good?" This was too much even for a ministerial meeting, and it adjourned precipitately amid much hilarity.

Some of Dick's favorite sayings, which he always got in in the right place, are as follows:

"Here's your morning papers."

"Right this way for the Deal House."

"Quick, now, here's your car; all aboard for Galion."

"Won't you take a drink? I won't; no, sir; I'm temperance."

"Are you hungry?"

"Say, are you cold? I'm so cold I can't stand it. Come on, let's go home."

"Good-by, I'm going. Kiss me before I go, old sweetheart. Hurry up, kiss your old honey, again."

"Hello, Papa Kerr, are you sick? Poor papa, he's sick."

"Where's Eva; I want Eva."

"All aboard, train north. Hurry now."

"I'm so tired. Do you want to go to bed, too? What, do you have to go? O, well, good night, then. Push yourself out. Call again." Then Dick would say, remorsefully: "You are a bad boy, Dick. You are an old rascal. You are a good for nothing, an old squaller. Shame on you, shut right straight up. That's my idea."